

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 891

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 128

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: SECSTATE REES CALMS POLITICAL ROW

REF: BELFAST 125

1. LOCAL PRESS AND PRIVATE REACTIONS TO EVENTS PAST
TWENTY FOUR HOURS INDICATE SECRETARY OF STATE MERLYN REES
HAS YET AGAIN CALMED A POLITICAL CONTROVERSY WITH POTENTIALLY
SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS LOCALLY. IN PARLIAMENTARY REPLY TO
LABOUR M.P. WELLBELOVED APRIL 14 MR. REES REPORTEDLY
ACCEPTED BOTH GENERAL KING'S ASSURANCES THAT HIS CRITICAL
REMARKS ABOUT DETENTION (REFTEL) TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT AND
HIS REGRETS OVER POLITICAL FURORE. AT SAME TIME MR. REES
EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN GENERAL KING AND IN HIS ADVICE ON
SECURITY MATTERS, DEMONSTRATED CONVINCINGLY THAT HE RATHER
THAN THE ARMY WAS IN CHARGE OF POLICY IN NORTHERN IRELAND
AND IN A REPLY TO M.P. ENOCH POWELL DENIED THAT THE RELEASE
OF DETAINEES WAS THE SUBJECT OF "NEGOTIATIONS." LOCALLY
THIS MEANS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PROVISIONAL IRA ON CEASEFIRE
TERMS. LATER IN THE DAY FOUR MORE REPUBLICAN DETAINEES WERE
RELEASED, THE SECSTATE HAD A BRIEF PRIVATE MEETING WITH
GENERAL KING AND THE USUAL WEEKLY MEETING ON SECURITY MATTERS
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FOLLOWED. MEASURE OF LOCAL RESPECT FOR REES APPARENT IN
AFTERMATH HIS REVELATION PARLIAMENT THAT HE TARGET LOYALIST

ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT LAST MAY. ALTHOUGH ATTACK WAS
UNDISCLOSED AT TIME NOBODY IN ULSTER HAS CLAIMED SECSTATE
NOW FABRICATING FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES.

2. APRIL 14 WAS LAST DAY FOR CANDIDATES IN CONVENTION
ELECTION TO FILE AND MAKE DEPOSITS. ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY
FIVE CANDIDATES FILED TO CONTEST 78 CONVENTION SEATS. SOCIAL
DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP) WILL FIELD THIRTY
WHICH LARGEST NUMBER FROM SINGLE PARTY. UNITED ULSTER
UNIONIST COALITION (UUUV) WILL HAVE 62 CANDIDATES DIVIDED
OFFICIAL UNIONISTS 27, DEMOCRATIC UNIONISTS 18, VANGUARD
UNIONISTS 17. REPUBLICAN CLUBS (OFFICIAL SINN FEIN) 17,
UNIONIST PARTY NORTHERN IRELAND 18, ALLIANCE PARTY 23,
NORTHERN IRELAND LABOUR PARTY 6, COMMUNISTS 2 AND
INDEPENDENTS 7. PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN AND IRISH REPUBLICAN
SOCIALIST PARTY BOYCOTTING.

3. UUUC MIGHT WELL HAVE USED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SECSTATE
AND GOC AS CAMPAIGN AMMUNITION. UUUC MADE UP LARGELY OF
HARD-LINE LOYALISTS WHO OPPOSE PARTICIPATION OF MINORITY
COMMUNITY IN GOVERNMENT AT EXECUTIVE LEVEL. INTERPRETATION
GENERAL KING'S REMARKS THAT HE PERCEIVES MAIN THREAT TO ULSTER
PEACE AS EMANATING FROM THAT COMMUNITY WOULD STRENGTHEN SUPPORT
FOR UUUC IN JITTERY ULSTER ELECTORATE. IT OBVIOUS HERE THAT
GENERAL KING DOES NOT RPT NOT INTEND REPEAT OR EXPAND ON
CRITICISM. IF PROVISIONAL IRA MAINTAINS CEASEFIRE AND
CONFINES PRE-ELECTION ACTIVITY TO CALL FOR VOTER BOYCOTT,
ISSUE OF REES-KING DIFFERENCES SHOULD ABATE.

4. SDLP APPEARS PREPARED PRESENTLY TO PUSH ISSUE OF GOC
"BIGOTRY." M.P. AND PARTY LEADER GERRY FITT MEETING WITH
SECSTATE REES TODAY TO DISCUSS GENERAL'S REMARKS. HOWEVER REAL
ISSUE HERE IS SECTARIAN NATURE CONTINUING TERRORIST ATTACKS
BY PROTESTANT INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS ON CATHOLICS. GOVERNMENT
UNDER GREAT PRESSURE TO DEVISE TACTICS END THESE ATTACKS BUT
APPARENTLY AT LOSS ON HOW DO SO. RESUMPTION DETENTION FOR
SUSPECTED LOYALISTS WHILE CONTINUING RELEASE REPUBLICANS
DOES NOT RPT NOT SEEM TO BE THE ANSWER. LOYALIST
PARAMILITARIES AND POLITICIANS HAVE GENERAL STRIKE TACTIC
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IN RESERVE. IT SIGNIFICANT ONE INDIVIDUAL ATTEMPTING RESOLVE
CURRENT FEUD BETWEEN ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE AND ULSTER DEFENSE
ASSOCIATION HAS ADMITTED PUBLICLY IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT RE
REENACT "UWC TYPE STRIKE" WHILE PARAMILITARIES AT ODDS.

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